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THE
Eternal and Intrinsick Reasons
OF
GOOD and EVIL
SERMON

PREACHED at the
COMMENCEMENT
AT
CAMBRIDGE,
On SUNDAY the Second Day
of July, 1699.

By JOHN EDWARDS, D.D.

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PSALM CXIX. cxlii.

Thy Righteousness is an Everlasting Righteousness, and thy Law is the Truth.

IT is not to be doubted that the Subject of this *Psalm* is the *Moral Law*, or the Precepts of Just and Righteous Living, which are contain'd in the *Ten Commandments*, and which we find interspersed in *Moses's* Writings, especially in the Book of *Deuteronomy*. The Royal Prophet directing here his words to God, calls these *his Righteousness* and *his Law*, and he adds that this Righteousness is *Everlasting*, and that this Law is *the Truth*. The most easy and obvious meaning of the former clause of which words is this, that this Divine Law, which he is speaking of, had its Existence from Everlasting, it was always what

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it is now. Which is of the same import of what he saith in the 160. y. of this Psalm, *Thy Word is True from the beginning*, i. e. from Everlasting, for these two are synonymous, as appears from *Prov. 8. 23.* The Rules and Measures of what is Just and Right were determin'd and fix'd from Eternity. And besides, they are of Perpetual and Eternal Obligation, they are such Laws as shall never be repeal'd: whence our *Psalmist* saith in another place, *All God's Commandments are sure, they stand fast for ever and ever, Psal. 111. 7, 8.* For what is Good or Evil in its own nature, can at no time, or upon any account be alter'd. Which brings me to the Interpretation of the latter Clause of the Words, *Thy law is the Truth*, i. e. these Rules of Moral Righteousness must needs be Immutable and Perpetual, because they are no imaginary or precarious things, nor do they depend upon humane Institution and Arbitrement; but they are Real and True in themselves, they are Solid and Sub-

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Substantial, there being an Intrinsic Goodness and excellency in them. On this account they have *Subsistence* and *Reality*, and therefore may properly and strictly be said *to Be* and *to be True*. Which is a Notion that a Profound Man among the *Gentiles* had long since attain'd to; for he tells us, That the Law of Nature or True Morality is **the finding of being*.

* Τὸ εὑρίσκειν.
Socrat. apud
Platonem.

Then this is the Proposition that I will Entertain you with at present, that the Reasons of Good and Evil are Eternal and Unchangeable; that there are such things as Right or Wrong, without any Positive Law or Constitution; that these had the start of all human Contracts and Customs; and, in short, that Religion and Virtue are ingrafted in our very Nature, and are every ways suited to the Frame of Rational Creatures. This I will evince 1. From the Nature of God. 2. From what we find in the Mind of Man. 3. From the Behaviour and Actions

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of

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of Mankind. 4. From the Uni-
versal consent of the World.

1. *God's Nature or Mind* is the
Eternal Foundation of Goodness
and Righteousness, and therefore
these cannot but be Real and Eter-
nal. It is certain that the *Essen-
tial Bonity*, which is in Mens
Actions, is grounded on the *Chief
Good*, that which *Plato* frequently
calls * *Goodness it self, and the Idea
and Pattern of all Goodness*. For
whence could Goodness be fetch'd,
but from this Divine Source? It
could not be deriv'd from Angels
nor Men, (and we can't think of
any Rank of Beings else whence
there is a probability of its being
deriv'd) because they themselves
are from God, and therefore it
would be unreasonable to think,
that that which is Best in them
was not from Him. Yea, from
Him alone it must necessarily be,
in whose Perfect Nature the
Ideas and Platforms of it were
from Eternal Ages: for as the Ideas
of

* *Αὐτοῦ-
λας, Αὐτῶ-
αγαθόν, ὅ
αγαθὸν ἰδέσθαι.*
De Leg. &
alibi.

of *Truth* were eternally Existent in God's *Understanding*, so his *Will* was pregnant, and replenish'd with Goodness and Holiness. Which is a Notion we cannot but form of the Divine Being, because He being *most Perfect*, we can't possibly conceive of Him without apprehensions of both these, *viz.* his Understanding fraught with Truth, and his Will with Goodness. Now, from this Eternal Fountain, the Goodness and Righteousness of Men have their Original, and consequently they can't but be Real and True, and have an inward worth in them, because whatever partakes of the Divine Nature and Perfection, is really worthy and excellent. It is then the holy Nature of the Divine Being that is the prime Source, as well as Rule of human Sanctity and Righteousness. It is this on which they depend, for it is the Pattern of them. Goodness in us is but a Copy of that Original, that Essential and Immutable Goodness, which is in the Supreme

Good. This is the true Root of all Rectitude, Justice and Righteousness. The Eternal Laws of Just and Good, which are in the Divine Mind, are the Pillars on which the Moral Goodness of Rational Beings is founded. Hence it is that the Laws of Good and Evil, of just and Unjust among Men, are in their own nature firm and solid, and never to be abolish'd, for they are eternally Good, and grounded on the unchangeableness of the Supreme Being. The Reasons of them did exist from Eternity in the Divine Nature, and they were ever conformable to the upright will of God, and for that Reason cannot be otherwise. Thus it appears, that Moral Righteousness being originally founded in the Being and Nature of God, must constantly be Immutable.

2. The Intrinsic and unchangeable Nature of it is demonstrated, not only from our tracing it up to its First Head, but from its being seated by God in the *Mind* of

of Man. For *this* is the very Image and Pourtraiture of God himself, and consequently, seeing *Truth* and *Goodness* are Essential to the Divine Nature (as was said before) these Excellencies are also inseparable from the *Soul* of Man. And therefore from the Nature of human Souls, as such, it were easy to prove, that there were Innate Notions, not only of *True* and *False*, but of *Good* and *Evil*, imprinted on them at their first make. And tho' we have not the *Use* of these Original Notions presently, or in our Infancy and Childhood (as some urge) yet it is ridiculous to infer thence, that they are not in the Soul: for on the same ground it might be prov'd, that a Man hath no *Rational Soul* for several Years, because the Faculties of it do not actually exert themselves. But we are sure that those Mental Impressions were in all Men from the Beginning, because they are the First Emanations of their natural frame, as they are Reasonable Beings, and

as their Souls resemble the Divinity. Hence it follows, as a clear and incontestible Truth, that, tho' by the early Apostacy of the First Man our human Nature is deprav'd, our Faculties are corrupted, and we have an inward proclivity to what is vicious, so that it is the work of the *Holy Spirit* to enable us to do any Good that can be acceptable to God; yet there are remaining in us, as we are human Creatures and Rational Agents, Natural Principles and Sentiments of Morality. And therefore we may observe, That One, who is an unquestionable Asserter of the original depravity of Mankind, is yet very positive in this, that ** there is in the Souls of Men a sense of Divinity and Religion, and that even by a Natural Instinct*; and accordingly he spends a whole Chapter to prove the existence of this Inbred Principle in the Minds of all Men. And truly, every Man alive, that is attentive and unprejudiced, may feel this in him as soon as he is arrived to the use of Reason,

* Quendam ineffabilem humanam mentem, & quidem naturali instinctu, divinitatis Sensum, extra controversiam ponimus. Calvin. Instit. l. i. c. 3. Omnibus inditum esse divinitus Religionis semen experientia testatur. Ibid. c. 4.

Reason, (for he can't expect it should actually display it self till then) or whenever he hath occasion given him to exercise his thoughts concerning Moral and Divine things. To this the Great Apostle refers in *Rom. 2. 14, 15.* when he tells us, that *the Gentiles who have not the Law, (i. e. the written Law) do by nature (i. e. by vertue of these radical notions of Moral Goodness in their Minds) the things contain'd in the Law,* they are push'd on to it, by this Natural Principle within them. Hence it is that tho' *they have not the Law, yet they are a Law unto themselves,* because they have this inward Law in their own Minds, which instructs them what to do, as to the great Duties of Natural Religion. Therefore he adds, that *they shew the work of the Law written in their hearts,* namely in these Original Characters by God's own hand. So that nothing could be said more plainly to Establish these inward Signatures and Impresses of Goodness on the Soul.

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And they were Engraven there for *Great* and *Excellent Purposes* in the life of Man: whence we may further evince, That there are *indeed* such Inbred Principles and Notions. There being so many ways of Delusion and Error in the World, such a diversity of avocations from Religion and Goodness, and the Worship of the Divine Being, and such Charming Temptations every where to a vicious Life; it was requisite there should be such *Inward Directors* as these in Mens Breasts. There being such Impediments to Truth and Goodness as Passion, Prejudice, Interest, Pleasures, and these continually operating upon us; it was necessary there should be something within us to remind us of what is True and what is Good, something within us that opposes it self to all the aforesaid obstacles and hindrances. There was a necessity that there should be a Divine Principle in our Souls, which should be as it were a continual *Fund* to our Conscience, always to supply
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and furnish them with Virtuous Dictates. Amongst the most rude and barbarous People it is *This* that keeps up some kind of Notion of Honesty and Goodness. Yea, and among those that are Civiliz'd, these would be in danger of being lost, if there were not this Principle rooted in their Minds. All that is Just and Right would have been banish'd out of the World, unless this prevalent Inmate had acted its part, and kept us from being wholly bereft of them. We had long since been absorpt of Atheism and Profaness, if this had not powerfully secured us. Were it not for this active Spark, the Fire of Virtue would have been extinguish'd, and it would have been impossible to preserve it in the midst of that Deluge of Vice, which hath broken in upon us. God took care therefore, that there should be ingrafted in the heart of every Man, learned or illiterate, these Moral Impressions which I am speaking of, which will not suffer Mankind to be wholly alienated from a sense
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of what is Good and Virtuous. It may be attributed to this, that, notwithstanding the General Depravation and Corruption, there is yet a face of Religion in the World. For it is an undoubted Truth, That *This* buoys up Goodness when it is sinking, this supports it when it is falling, this keeps it alive when it is even expiring. So absolutely *necessary* was the implanting of *these* *Notions* in Mens Minds from their very birth. And then (which is the thing I have been proving) these Innate Principles of Good and Evil thus implanted in us, are a certain and unquestionable evi-
etion of Intrinsick excellency of Moral Religion, and of all Virtuous and Just Actions, which are but Transcripts and Exemplifications of those Original Conceptions placed by God in the Minds of Men.

As the real and unchangeable nature of Moral Rigteousness is proved from its conformity to the Supreme and Eternal Good, and
from

from the Images of Good, which our Minds are furnish'd with from our birth, so it may be evidenc'd from the constant *Behaviour and Practice of Mankind* afterwards. This I will make appear from these following particulars, 1. From Mens excusing their sins. 2. From their desiring Secrecy when they commit them. 3. From ~~the~~ Regrets and Remorses which they feel afterward. 4. From the Fear of Punishment which haunts them. 5. From that Dislike and Hatred which even Bad Men themselves have of Vice.

First, The Intrinsick Excellency of Vertue is manifested from Mens *Excusing* their sins and vicious practises, and devolving them upon others. This was in the World as soon as Sin it self. *Adam* would needs cast his Transgression and Guilt upon his Relative, and she put it off to the *Serpent*. This hath been the practice of sinners ever since: tho' they know themselves to be really Criminal, yet they endeavour to throw off their faults,

faults, and they use all sorts of palliations and pretensions to clear themselves; and particularly they are wont to usurp the Names and Titles of Virtue to conceal their evil deeds, fondly disguising these latter under a shew and resemblance of the former. But whilst they do so, they confess, that *Virtue* is Excellent and Laudable, otherwise they would not emulate the likeness of it: and they acknowledge, that *Vice* is in it self base and reproachful, and that the rational nature of Man is averse to it, else they would not excuse it, and shift it off: nay, 'tis certain they would own it, if it were Good and praise-worthy. But they have natural convictions of the contrary, which make them strive to clear themselves of it: and these Evasions are a palpable proof that Vice is a thing opposite to the reasonable frame of their Souls, and is of its own nature Evil, and that there is a distinction between Just and Unjust, Right and Wrong, founded in the nature of things.

Again,

Again, this also appears from Men's desiring of *Secrecy* when they commit sin, and after they have committed them. For tho' one reason of their sculking and absconding is, because they would not be defeated in what they undertake, or be detected when it is performed; yet this is another reason of their affecting of privacy, namely, because they are *ashamed* to act those vile things in the Eyes of the World. Vice is so ugly and deformed, that they would not have it seen: and when it is they blush and are confounded at their own evil doings. Which is signify'd to us in that Expostulation *Rom. 6. 21. What profit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* This blushing argues an inward turpitude in vitious actions: whereas Virtue, which is Good in it self, is daring, and carries Confidence with it. If there were not a real blemish and stain in unjust and lewd practises, why should Men be ashamed of them? Why should they be put out of countenance,

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and look like Malefactors? Why should they fly to their Coverts, and run into corners, and fear a discovery? There was an early Example of this in the first Sinners, they retired, and *hid themselves*, Gen. 3. 8. On which an Antient and Pious Father of the Christian Church hath these remarkable words, * *Why did Adam, after he had sinned, hide himself, seeing at that time there was no written Law? The Reason was, because he had a natural inbred knowledge that he had done ill, he being self-instructed in the knowledge of Virtue.* And thence arose in him that inward bashfulness and dejection of Soul after the commission of Sin, and thence he fondly attempted to hide not only himself, but his Crime from God. And it is observable that *Cain* refus'd to discover his murdering of his Brother; when God demanded of him where he was, his surly reply was, *he knew not*, Gen. 4. 9. Which concealing of Vice argues the intrinsick Evil of it, for why else is it mask'd with

* S. Chrysost.
1st. Hom.
12. ad Pop.
Antioch.

with privacy and retirement, and kept from the knowledge of others as much as it is possible, yea even of those sometimes that can't hurt us? This is an argument that Virtue is good and lovely, and that the contrary is vile and detestable, and that the Mind of Man naturally approves of Moral Goodness, and dislikes Vice and Immorality.

Further, the *Regrets* and *Remorses* of Sinners for their acting contrary to the Divine Laws, are certain Testimonies of this Truth. Why do they call themselves to an account, and arraign, and pass Sentence upon themselves for what they have done? Why are they uneasy and dissatisfy'd, and find an unspeakable Trouble in their Minds? Is not this from Natural Conscience, and those inbred impressions, which are in the Soul of every Man? Yes, without doubt, these cause them to rebuke and chastise themselves, and that very severely, when they offend against these inward Dictates. Thence

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come those Vexations and Torments which willful Transgressors feel in their Breasts, yea tho' their faults be kept secret, and none knows them but themselves. Notwithstanding this, they are troubled and disquieted, and as the *Satyrist* well remarks of such Men,

* *Jwv. Sat.* *Tacitâ sudant præcordia culpâ.*
 11.

But especially the more open and profligate Sinners have frequent experience of these inward Inquietudes, Sweatings and Agonies, which render them a Plague and Torment to themselves. *Cain* complain'd, that *his iniquity* (for so the original word should be rendred) *was greater than he could bear*, *Gen. 4. 13.* That is, the Guilt of his heinous Sin became an insupportable burden to him. So *Judas*, from the horror of his Guilt, sunk into despair. And who sees not that the usual effects of great and flagitious enormities are Pain and Torture of Mind, Deliquiums of Soul and Body, and the wasting
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and macerating of the flesh and spirits, by continual restlessness and disturbance? The ground of it is obvious, for Sin is a violent distorting of the natural and primitive temper of Man, and therefore it cannot but create extreme anguish and perturbation. One reason why Men are displeas'd with themselves after the commission of what is Immoral, is because they find they have acted contrary to their Native Principle, because they have done something that is unsuitable to the rational nature which they are endued with. It appears hence that Sin is naturally Evil, and that it is an affront to our Reasons and Understandings to transgress the Laws of Morality. Thus a Man's own Mind establishes the Equity and Goodness of these Laws, and convinces him that the Foundations of Moral Righteousness are sure and stable.

Moreover, this may be made evident from *the Fear of punishment*, w^{ch} haunts and possesses the Minds

of Evil Men. Thus *Cain*, the first Murderer, was afraid that *every one that found him would slay him*: he had a perpetual dread of the fatal recompense, which was the merit of his villany. And Natural Conscience tells all other sinners that they deserve punishment: *they know the Judgment of God, that they who commit such things, are worthy of death*, as the Apostle speaks: and this knowledge unavoidably breeds Fear and Dread. Some would needs persuade us that this Passion is rais'd by Politick Heads, by Wise Rulers and Governours, merely to awe their dastard Subjects: but it is evident that this is a falsity, because Princes and Rulers themselves are liable to these Impressions; nay, we know they actually have been under the force and prevalency of such Principles. *Belsazar* the Great Babylonian Monarch fell into fits of shaking and trembling, when the Hand-writing on the Wall put him in Mind of his Profaness, and Debauchery, and the just Deserts of both
both

both. King *Herod* after the murder of *John Baptist* was restless in his Mind, and had the terrible sight of that Holy Man continually represented to his fancy, and * *he thought he was risen from the dead*, and was come to Torment him. *Tiberius* the Emperour was not able to conceal the terrors and affrightments of his Conscience, after all his unnatural Lusts and Cruelties. *Nero* after all his prodigious villanies could not dissemble his horrors, and his being haunted with Spirits, and tormented with Furies and Flames. Which plainly shews, that this dread of Mind is no Politick Invention, no Feigned Passion and Representation, no idle Phantom or Mormo; but that it is a real thing, and flows from the natural Dictates of the Mind, and not these from Fear, as some would suggest. Why should Men be afraid of the Divine Being, if they deserv'd not his Displeasure? And how can they deserve it, unless they have done something amiss, *i. e.* broken some

* Mat. 14
2.

Law, which they were oblig'd to keep? There must then be some obligation on Man from *Nature* to observe such and such Laws: for I speak even of those who have thrown off all Obligations but this. Their being conscious to themselves that they have not acted as they ought, and that thereby they are become guilty, creates this Timorousness and Dread in them, and gives them an apprehension of the great Day of Doom.

In the next place I argue from the *Dislike* and *Hatred*, which even Bad Men themselves have of some *Vices*, and from that great *Esteem* which they have of some *Virtues*. *Pride* is universally disrelish'd, and the very Persons who cherish it in themselves, abhor it in others. Nothing is more generally abominated than a Proud and Arrogant Man; and on the contrary, nothing is more valu'd, lov'd, and carest'd than one that is *Humble* and *Meek*. Even those very Persons, whose practice is a remonstrance against
Humi-

Humility, have at the same time an inward liking of this Virtue, yea and outwardly express their approbation of it. The *Avaritious* and *Sordid Niggard* is scorn'd and laught at by every one: but the *Liberal* and *Generous* are applauded by all. *Clean* and *Chast Discourse* meets with an universal acceptance: but *Obscenity* and *Ribaldry*, tho' dress'd in the Garb of Wit, are generally nauseos and offensive, and the Organ of Hearing is as 'twere disoblig'd, and even hurt by them; and oftentimes the Hearer blushes, because the Speaker doth not. A *Liar* is a Title of the greatest reproach and infamy among Men: a *lying Tongue* is not only one of those things which

* *the Lord hateth*, but 'tis as † odious to all Men; whereas a *Plain* and *Open Speaking*, without any Dissimulation or Reserve, is a very graceful and amiable thing, and nothing is more valu'd and commended in the World. Again, *Oppression*, *Violence*, *Rapine*, *Persecution*, and especially if these proceed to

* Prov 6,

17.

† Το γὰρ

ψευδὲς καὶ

πᾶν ἀν-

θρώπου μὴ

σὺν αἰσῶν.

Plutarch.

de Educat,

Pueror,

*Sueton. in
Jul. Caf.

Bloodshed and Slaughter, are hated of all Persons, yea of those who practice these Vices most of all. *Julius Cæsar* had ever in his mouth that of *Euripides*, * *If Right at all may be violated, it must be for the sake of a Crown; but in other matters let us be exactly just.* The greatest Invaders acknowledge Justice to be good, and it is Interest only that warps their judgment. The *Banditi* and *Rapparees* rob for mere Gain, and even *Assassines* and *Ruffians* must be well paid to do their work; which shews there is no temptation in the Thing it self. A *Common Thief* had rather find than take away another Man's good; and whilst he doth the latter, he disapproves of it. Or say, that he approves of it in himself, yet he detesteth in all others. So *Perfidiousness* and *Treachery* meet with a Catholick abhorrence; and those who reward these practises, yet hate the things themselves, and the Actors of them are always odious in the World, and sometimes signally punish'd by them who

who set them on work. But *Faithfulness, Sincerity, Honesty, Frankness,* and *True-heartedness* are belov'd by all Men. And it were easy to shew in other Instances, that Vicious and Immoral Actions are lothed even by Sinners themselves, and that they who dare not practice Wisdom and Virtue, yet * praise and commend it, and are willing to see it thrive in the World. Thus from the *Behaviour* and *Deportment* of Men, even those who are of the worst sort, it is evident that Virtue is praise-worthy in its own Nature, and that there is an inward Principle in all Men, that makes them pay respect to Goodness and Honesty, and to disparage what is vicious and unlawful.

* Neque enim unquam tantum convalescet nequitia, nunquam sic contra virtutes conturbabitur, ut non Sapientie nomen venerabile & sacrum maneat.
Sen. Epist.

In the last place, I will prove the Laws of Moral Goodness to be Intrinsic and Natural from their being *universally receiv'd*. For that of *Tully* is an unquestionable Maxim, † *When all the People agree in a thing, we are to look upon it as the*

† Consensio omnium gentium jus naturae putanda est.
Tusc. Q. 1.

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the Law of Nature. Now, it is evident that there is among all Men an Agreement, as to the main, about the Notion of Good and Evil. Just and Right are every where, and among all Persons the same, as *Fire burns here and in Persia*, (to use the words of the famous * *Stagyrite.*)

* Ethic. l. 5.
c. 7.

We are told by *Valerius Maximus*, that the very Barbarous *Scythians* took care of their Fathers Tombs, religiously preserv'd them; whereupon he makes this seasonable Remark, † *Nature, the first and the best of things, is the Mistress of Piety, so that we need not be taught and instructed in it.* And again in the same place, *Solid Virtue is born with us rather than made and fashion'd.* And indeed it must needs be so, because the notices and impressions of Good and Evil on Mens Minds are *Universal*: and it is impossible they should be otherwise, because they are *Natural*, for Nature universally spreads it self in every individual. Hence is that *Common Consent* in all Men concerning the grand Points of Morality;

† Prima & optima rerum Naturae pietatis est magistra, quæ nullo vocis ministerio, nullo usu literarum indigens, propriis ac tacitis viribus charitatem parentum peccatoribus liberorum infundit. lib. 5. c. 4. Solida virtus nascitur magis quam fingitur.

lity: they are voted to be Reasonable and Just, by the whole assembly of Mankind throughout the World.

I know this is oppos'd by the Learned Mr. * *Selden*, and some others, especially of late, who hold that *Universal Consent* is no argument to prove the Law of Nature. Or rather, they say, There is no such thing as Universal Consent, there being so many various Opinions and Practises in Morality and Religion. But I desire these following things may be consider'd, which will fully answer the suggestions of those who oppose this Doctrine. First, I grant that God hath judicially given over some People to sense, and that because *they* have given *themselves* over first to their Lusts, and have willfully shut their Eyes against the light. Hence it is that they have in many things corrupted and distorted the Law of Nature, and then it is no wonder, that they have been permitted to fall into the most
irra-

* De Jure
Natur. &
Gent. l. 1.
c. 6, 7.

irrational practises, as that of Idolatry, and the like.

But I add next, That this Corruption is not in the *First* and *General Principles* of Nature, but in some undue *Inferences* and *Deductions* thence. Thus in the case of *Polytheism* or *Idolatry*, which is the adoring of False Gods, and was ever a Catholick crime among the common sort of Heathens, there is the *General Dictate* of Natural Religion kept up, *viz.* the worshipping of a Deity, tho' they are so ignorant and corrupted as to conclude this and the other thing to be a God, tho' they are not. So there is no Man or Nation extant, who think it lawful to *hurt* or *injure* any one: but there is some disagreement as to the *Particular Inferences*, which may arise from these Premises; and in some particular Instances, *that* may be thought by some to be injurious, which is not deemed so by others. And thus those Usages among *Barbarous Nations*, which are so far

far different from our, may be reconcil'd, as namely, their eating the Dead, in stead of burying them; and their dispatching their sick Parents out of the World, which they look upon as a Courtesy done to them, and several the like practises. In which the first and general Principles of Morality are not violated, but only some false Conclusions are drawn from them. Notwithstanding which, the main and essential Laws of Good and Evil are the same, and are own'd to be so.

Again, with particular relation to Mr. *Selden's Objection* (which a late Writer hath borrow'd from him, and makes great use of) viz. That there is no Natural and Universal Law of Morality, because the *Gentiles* are so vicious, and act so contrary to the light of Reason: I answer, that when I assert the Law of Nature to be Universal, I mean, that it prevails among all Men in the World that are of *sound Minds*, and who carefully attend
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to the Dictates of Natural Conscience, and who *use* their Understandings, and make Reflections, and exercise their Faculties. But if there be some (and too many there are) who are stupid and sottish, and attend not to the Inbred Notions of their Minds, (whereby these Notions are in a manner defaced, and almost extinguish'd) I am not to answer for these. When I speak of *Universal Consent*, I understand it of those that think and consider, and are not wont to debauch and distemper their Reasons, as those Rude and Savage *Gentiles* do. Wherefore we are not at all concern'd for the *Brasilians* or *Caribes*, no nor for the *Soldanians* and *Hotentots*, with the noise of whom our Ears are mightily grated of late. The strange Behaviour of these People is no real reproach to Human Nature, nor any impeachment of the General Laws of Morality, which all People agree in who rouse their inward Principle, and give heed to it. And thence I gather that the Precepts of Virtue are immovable

movable and unalterable, for they are fix'd and riveted into the very Nature of Mankind, or else there would not be an *Universal Agreement* about them.

I might go on to farther Proofs of the Intrinſick Nature of Good and Evil, from thoſe *Absürd Conſequential*, which would follow from the contrary. *First*, if there be no ſuch thing, and if, notwithstanding what hath been alledged, Virtue and Vice are caſual and contingent, then our Faculties were given us to cheat and abuſe us, and they are continually impos'd upon, and that about their proper objects: which is a Doctrine that would deſtroy even a *Deity*, and we could ſay nothing to prove there is ſuch a Being. Or, allowing a God, it would be a reproach to his Goodneſs and Wiſdom, to beſtow ſuch mental Powers upon us, as are conſtantly deceiv'd, and to implant ſuch Notions in the Souls of all Men as are falſe and erroneous, and which have nothing real and ſolid in them.

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Secondly,

Secondly, this also would be a Consequence from the Premises, that we may live and act as we please: for if there be no fix'd Laws and Rules of Goodness and Righteousness, then nothing can be said to be Lawful, and consequently nothing can be said to be Unlawful: or what is Lawful to day, may be Unlawful to morrow. For if there be not any Inward Reason of the Moral Laws enjoin'd us by God, if they be not in themselves, and in their abstract nature Good; he may prescribe us other Laws, and those contrary to these which we now have; and so God may command us to hate him, and to hurt and mischief our Neighbours. If these things are not intrinsically evil, so that they can never be Good, they may in time become our Duty.

Thirdly, this is another Consequence, that our *Happiness* would be precarious and uncertain: for the Happiness of Rational Creatures depends on the Goodness of their Actions. And by this means we should

should be wholly unacquainted with the Great *End* of our Lives, which is the thing that is to steer us in this World, and to direct us in all we undertake. These are some of the egregious Blunders and monstrous *Absurdities* which attend the contrary Opinion, and may serve to confirm us in this weighty Point, that there is an Intrinsic Goodness in Virtuous actions, and an Intrinsic Evil in Vitious ones, and that the Reasons of both are congenite to our Rational Nature, and flow from it, and are ever agreeable to it.

Thus I have Establish'd the Doctrine which I undertook to discourse of. And it was necessary to do it, because tho' the generality of Mankind (as was said before) do unanimously averr, that Goodness is not plac'd in the arbitrary opinions of Men, but in Nature it self; yet there have been of old, and are at this day those who contradict and oppose it. The ancient

Scepticks were infamous for this; who had learnt of their Master *Pyrrho*, that there is † no difference between Good and Evil by *Nature*, but only by *Laws* and *Custom*. *Laertius* acquaints us, that it was the positive opinion of one of that sort of Men, that a Wise Man will not stick to commit *Sacrilege*, or *Adultery*, or to *Steal*, whenever he hath a fit opportunity; for * none of these (saith he) have any *Turpitude* in them in their own nature, if we can but lay aside the vulgar apprehension concerning them, which the rabble of *Fools* and *Ignorant People* have taken up. *Tully* testifies concerning the *Epicureans*, that they held *Honest* and *Just* to be ‡ *assum quiddam, & inani vocis sono decoratum*, a vain and frivolous thing, set forth and commended to the World by a mere empty sound of Words. This also was the Sentiment of some that pretended to be *Christians*, as the *Gnosticks*, and especially *Carpocrates*, who was a Great Man with that

† *Laert. in vit. Pyrrh.*

* *Μηδὲν ὅτι
ἔστιν ἡ τῶν
αἰσχρῶν φύ-
σις, ὅτι ἐν
αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἔστι
αἰσχρῶδες,
&c. Laert.
in Aristip.*

‡ *Tusc. Q. lib. 5.*

that party: he with much earnestness avow'd, that all * Moral actions are indifferent, and that all the Good or Evil that is said to be in them, is founded not on Truth, but Fancy, as *Theodoret* bears witness concerning him, and quotes *Irenæus* for it.

* Ἀδιάφορα ὄντα, καὶ ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.—
ἐδίδως φωνὴ καὶ ἐν πάρεργίῳ.—
δόξῃ, ὡς ἀληθείᾳ ἐν μὲν πρᾶγμα-
μάτων κα-
ὶ εἶναι δό-
ξῃ, ἐν δὲ ἀ-
γαθῇ. Theo-
doret. hæ-
ret. Fab.
L. I.

But to come down lower, they have, it seems, a power in the Church of *Rome* to change the nature of Vice and Virtue. It is agreed on by the chiefest Writers of that Communion, That the *Pope* hath such *Plenitude of Power*, that he can dispense with Just and Right, and any Law of God, excepting only the Articles of Faith. So saith the *Glosse* upon the Canon-Law, and *Panormitan* approves of it. *Bellarmino*, their Great Champion, speaks home to the business, † If the *Pope* (saith he) could erre so far as to command the practice of Vice, and to forbid the practice of Virtue, the Church in that case is oblig'd, unless it would sin against Conscience, to believe Vice to be

† Si autem Papa erraret præcipiendo vitia, vel prohibendo virtutes, teneretur Ecclesiæ credere vitia esse bona, & virtutes malas, nisi vellet contra conscientiam peccare. De Sum. Pontif. l. 5. c. 5.

Good, and Virtue to be Evil. Judge now whether the Reasons of Good and Evil be not taken away by the Church of *Rome*, when it can alter the property of Virtue and Vice, and when their People are bound in Conscience to take one for the other. Judge whether they do not ascribe more to their Great *Pontif* than can be attributed to God himself: for certainly it is so far from being in the power of any Man to alter the Natural and Moral Law, and to take away the obligation of it, that it is not within the verge of Divine power it self. It is the decision of the Famous *Grotius* (who is always very wary when he speaks concerning *what God can do*, as indeed it doth become us: yet it is the peremptory decision, I say, of that Great Man) in his Excellent Book of *the Right of Peace and War*, † *God himself cannot change this Law of Natural Goodness, he cannot make that which is intrinsically evil to be no evil.* And the Reason is, because then he would not be God, for his Nature would
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† Lib. 1.
c. 1.

be chang'd, which is a thing utterly impossible, and the very supposition of it is to be abhorred.

The Great *Gallick* Philosopher, who discourses so admirably concerning the *Moral Virtues*, was inclin'd to think, that they were not founded on immoveable Reasons: for in some places of his *Epistles* and in his *Answers*, where he holds that Goodness as well as Truth eternally depend on the *Divine Will* and its free determination, he seems to mean that God could have determin'd them otherwise, if he had pleas'd: and so, that which is now Good, might have been Evil. But this mistaken Notion of this Learned Man arose from his not considering and remembring, that the *Will* of God is always the same as to its intrinsick nature, and therefore what it now is, it ever was, and can never be otherwise, and consequently Goodness is unvariable, and that which is Good now can't be Evil at another time. Which if that Excellent Person had

A Sermon preach'd at the

bore in his Mind, he would not have argu'd from God's *Will* in that manner which he seems to do.

But I am sorry to find that in our own Nation likewise there are those who oppose the Intrinsic Nature of Moral Goodness, and render it dubious and arbitrary. Among these ought to be mention'd in the first place that known Person, in whose *State of Nature* (w^{ch} he lays down as the foundation of his whole System) nothing is virtuous or vicious, just or unjust; for he holds that these arise only from Compact and Society. The *Magistrate* is Mr. *Hobbes's God*, the *Prince* is the Maker of Good and Evil, and he can unmake them when he pleases. Which is said well enough for such a Philosopher as holds a *Man* is nothing else but *Body* or *Carcase*.

† De Legibus Naturæ Disquisitio Philosoph.

Another Learned † Writer (tho' a professed Enemy to the former) resolves all Moral Philosophy into *Geometrical and Mechanick Principles*:

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*riple*s: which perhaps was design'd on purpose by that profound and sagacious Person to convince some in an Age of *Mathematicks*. He is follow'd and vouch'd by another, * who undertakes to improve him, * and to thrust this Conceit on the World, that *Experimental Observation* is the Standard of all Goodness and Morality: but I believe you will agree with me in this, that this is spoken rather like a *Virtuoso* than a *Divine*.

** Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Law of Nature. And his Account of Platonick Philosophy.*

There is another, who in his *Brief Disquisition of the Law of Nature*, hath refin'd upon both the former Writers, and makes it his work to shew that the proof of Natural Laws or Dictates of Reason, can be drawn only from the use of our *Senses*. He holds, that *by the motion impress'd on the Organs of our Senses, God delineates the Ideas or Images of all Moral Actions on our Mind*. He thinks there is no Notion of Moral Goodness or Evil but what is communicated to us by

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these,

* Chap. 2.
§. 20.

these, and consequently it is not *Innate*. Tho' by the bye it is well worth our observing, that he freely grants, that * *Beasts* derive not all their knowledge from their *Senses*, but are born with peculiar *appetites and inclinations, and have natural Instincts, or Impressions stamp'd by God on their very Natures*. So unkind are these Philosophick Masters to their own *Species*, as to grudge it the Prerogative and Excellency of a *Brute*. They not only degrade Mankind, but thrust them below the rank of Irrational Beings. But if you would know the particular way how Moral Sentiments are deriv'd to us, they tell you, this is the Method, and they admit of no other; *God makes external Causes operate on our bodily Organs, and by this operation and motion, in a certain and determinate manner, we attain to a notion of what is Vicious or Virtuous*. It is by the influence of outward Objects, and them only, that all Principles of Morality come to be known to us. But to dis-
prove

prove this, and at the same time to baffle the like Doctrine of another late Author.

First, I ask, How can *General Notions* of Morality be produc'd by the *External Senses*? Is there any cognation at all between *Abstract Ideas of Goodness* and mere *Bodily Objects*? Can a Man imagine that Universal and Complex Apprehensions can be the Offspring of the particular Matters of Corporeal Sense?

Secondly, If this Author and his Friends be in the right, then those Beings that are destitute of Bodily Sense can have no Notion of Good and Evil. Supposing *Angels* to be Incorporeal, Morality is a thing not known to them; nor is it known to *Separate Souls*, nor *Saints* in Heaven, nay not to *God* himself; because these are exempted from Bodily Senses, and consequently they are not capable of understanding any Moral Propositions.

Thirdly,

A Sermon preach'd at the

Thirdly, This Opinion, that Natural Motion produces Moral Goodness, is such confounding and jumbling together of *Physicks* and *Ethicks*, that none who have clear and distinct Conceptions of things will admit of it.

Fourthly and lastly, this Opinion makes all Morality contingent and uncertain, for all Natural and Bodily Motion (on which he holds it depends) is so : at one time or other it varies. External and Corporeal Causes are shifting and fickle : Objects work on us differently, yea the operations of the same Objects are not always the same ; and therefore Moral Goodness, which is founded on these, is no fix'd thing, but is unsteady and floating: we know not where to have it, according to this Author. These are the Reasons why I cannot approve of this New Method, which he hath taken to demonstrate the Truth of Morality, or rather to cashier and defeat it. Which he chuses rather to do, than
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to acknowledge any Inbred Principle in the Soul of Man.

I could have wish'd that Mr. Norris had not so contemptibly reflected on the Inbred Notions and Characters of Truth and Goodness on Mens Minds, as to reproach them with the Title of * *mere Jargon and unintelligible Cant*; especially seeing one that hath larded *some of his Writings* with so many unintelligible high-flown Strains, and *Platonick Gibberish*, (and even in the present matter which is before us talks of *the presentialness of the Ideal World to our Souls, which is the Divine Essence, wherein we see and understand all things*) might have been more favourable in his Censure.

* *Reflections on the Essay of Human Understanding.*

Another late Ingenious Author will by no means hear of Natural and Congenite Principles of Morality, but roundly tells us in these express words, that † *Men come to the knowledge of Moral Principles* and

† *Conference with a Theist.* 2d Part p. 36, and 37.

and Duties by Tradition: their Fathers taught them, and their Grand-fathers their Fathers, and so up to Adam the common Parent of all. And a little after he uses such language as this, Moral Duties are convey'd to all the World as Spinning and Weaving, and such like inventions. Whereby he confounds the Notions of Natural and Reveal'd Religion, and yet it is observable that in those Dialogues he first distinctly Discourses of Natural Religion, and then of Reveal'd. Whence it is evident that he not only contradicts himself, but mightily gratifies the Theist, whom he hath to deal with, and pretends to confute: but he not only baulks one of the greatest and strongest proofs we have of the Truth of Moral Notions and Offices, but he ridicules all Morality, by setting it on no other bottom than what the Trade of Weavers and Spinners hath. Thus we pull down that with our own hands which we pretend to build up; and even whilst

whilst some among us are confuting of *Deism*, they promote and advance it.

There is another Writer yet behind, who seems to shew himself, as backward to own a Natural Principle of Religion, as any of the forenam'd ones; for he sticks not to say, that * *there are no Notions naturally imprinted on the Mind*; for then, saith he, *Children and Ideots would have them*. But it is certain he might as strongly have argued, that there is no Reason or Prudence in Mankind, because neither *Children* nor *Ideots* are observ'd to exercise these. The *Logick* is every whit as good. And in another place, conformably to his denial of all Practical Principles in the Mind of Man, he speaks very doubtfully of *Virtue* it self; † *The name or sound of VIRTUE*, saith he, *is hard to be understood, it is liable to much Uncertainty in its signification: and the thing it stands for is much contended about, and difficult to be known*.

* *Essay of Humane Understanding, Book 1. Chap. 2.*

† *Essay, B. 1. C. 3. P. 23.*

known. And again, VIRTUES and SINS are words of uncertain signification, and among different Men stand for different things, p. 24.

At another time he confesses, that
 † *Essay, B. 2. c. 28.* † *he makes the Law, whereby we judge of Virtue and Vice, to be nothing else but the Consent of Private Men.* And in the same place he is positive, that *the measure of what is every where call'd and esteem'd Virtue and Vice, is Approbation or Dislike, Praise or Blame.*

* *Edition the First.*

And again, * *Nothing else but that which hath the allowance of Publick Esteem is Virtue.* Which words, (tho' he attempts to correct them in a later Edition) I am somewhat inclin'd to understand according to the plain and obvious meaning, and the rather, because it is probable, that as in other very considerable Points, so here he Symbolizes with the Philosopher of *Malmsbury*, in whose steps he affects to tread, and borrows some of his Thoughts. For as he follows him in his Opinion of *the Necessity of only One Fundamental Article*

Article of Christian Faith, and in his Notion of *Thinking matter*, and particularly in that of the likelihood or possibility of the *Materiality of Humane Souls*, and of their tendency (on that Principle) to *Morality*, and in his *Contempt of some parts of the Holy Scripture*, and in his avow'd Disbelief of the *Resurrection of the same Body*, and in his ridiculing of the *receiv'd Explication of † the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity*, and in his general favouring of *Scepticism* and *Infidelity*, and in his denial of *Natural and Inbred Notions*; so likewise he seems to be an humble imitator of the foreſaid Philosopher, in his Belief of the *precarious and arbitrary nature of Morality*: tho' it is true in a flourish he pretends at another time, that *Morality as well as Mathematicks may be demonstrated*. Surely that Proposition aforemention'd, viz. *Nothing else but that which hath the allowance of publick Esteem is Virtue*, may paſs for the *Leviathan Epitomiz'd*.

† Last Letter to the Bishop of Worcester, pag. 361, 362, 363.

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And here by the way I would observe this to you, That the Persons who speak contemptibly of *Reveal'd Religion* or any part of it, are, if you look narrowly into them, and their Writings, as deficient in their apprehensions and esteem of that which is *Natural* and meerly *Moral*, which yet they so much pretend to cry up. Whilst they strike at the *Principles of Faith* and the *Fundamental Articles* and *Mysteries of Christianity*, they cut the Sinews and take away the Props of *Morality* it self, and discard the true Grounds and Reasons of it. Which shews that their design and project is against *Virtue* in general, and that their aim is to put all out of order, to transpose and ranverse whatever hath any respect to *Religion*, and to confound every thing belonging to it, and thereby to expose *Religion* it self, and to make sport for the Atheistical and Scoffing part of the World.

The greater reason therefore is there that we should be settled in our Minds concerning these things,
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and that we should confirm and establish our selves more and more in this necessary and important Truth, (which I have endeavour'd to make good) that there are Eternal and Immutable Reasons of Good and Evil, that there is in all Immoral Actions a Repugnancy to a Rule of Right in our own Breasts, as well as in the Mind of our Creator. This is the true account of Moral Righteousness, namely, that it is built on the Nature of God, and of Human Souls, and the Universal Behaviour of Mankind. So that, to speak plainly, those that designedly set themselves against the Doctrine of *Inbred Principles of Good and Evil*, detract from the *Divinity* it self, and from the Essential Nature and Guise of *Mankind*. And we may assure our selves that such a Perswasion is the most debauching Principle in the World, and that those who wilfully and obstinately maintain it, have a very ill design upon Mankind. Which was the only ground of my so *Free* and

Plain Dealing with them, for 'tis in vain to Palliate where we design to Cure.

It remains that in the last place I should shew the *Virtue* and *Efficacy* the *Influence*, and *Usefulness* of the Premises: which might be done in several Particulars, but I will offer only this one Practical Inference from the whole. Let the Doctrine discours'd of be a mighty *Incentive to all Virtue and Goodness*. Seeing these are consonant to our Natural Principles and Dispositions, we have all the reason imaginable to comply with them. Why should we contradict our own Propensions, and be rebels to our Selves? As it is in Natural Motion, not *Crooked* lines, but *Right* and *Streight* ones are aim'd at: so it is in Morals, Man's Reasonable Nature aims at that which is his *Direct* and *Plain Duty*: and when he deviates from this *Right* Path, he acts against his true Primitive temper and genius. Let us consider then, that we ought to be Virtuous,

ous, because our very Nature obliges us to it. We are invited to be Just and Good, by something that is within us, and by the intrinsic Beauty of Goodness it self. We should prize Religion and a Holy Life, because they commend themselves to us by their own inherent and abstract worth. Let us not be backward in the practice of Virtue, seeing its own native Excellency encourages us to it. Those were Curious and Choise words of a † Gentile Writer, *This is one great help and advantage, saith he, to Virtue, to be made good,* *ἐκ τῆς ἀγαθότητος οὐκ ἐκ τῆς κακότητος*, by a Congenite Preparation: and such is the Inbred Principle, that I have been speaking of, whereby we are naturally enclin'd to live Virtuously. For tho' (as was said in the beginning of this Discourse) by the Depravity deriv'd from our First Progenitors, both our Understandings and are miserably shatter'd; yet these Original Impressions are not effaced, because they are of the very *Nature of Man* as he is a Rational Creature. There-

†Dio. Cass.
Hist. Rom.
lib. 44.

fore these cannot be wholly expung'd out of Mens Hearts, they are the Indelible Stamp of God on every Soul. And the more conformable any Man's Life and Actions are to them, the more clear and bright is his apprehension and judgment concerning the truth and reality, as well as the excellency of them.

Wherefore let us descend into our own breasts, and be acquainted with our selves : and by that means we shall come to find in our Minds a Stock of Principles, which will very much endear Religion to us: for as it will hugely please us to see a great part of our Religion born in us and bred up with us, so it will be a powerful motive to us to exert those Virtues which are so fitted to our Natures; and, as I may say, were Calculated for them. Wherefore having this prevalent *Incitement*, let us not be cold and indifferent in the practice of Righteousness and Holiness; let us manfully break through all
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obstacles and impediments, and let us be vigorous and zealous in the ways of Religion, even of that which God by an Infinite Principle dictates to us: and the rather because this is so considerable a step to and a part of that Higher Strain and Improvement, which we are *chiefly* to be concern'd for, namely, the Institution of the Blessed JESUS, conformity to which is absolutely necessary in order to our Salvation and Happiness. To conclude, let us be *steadfast*, and *unmoveable* in our duty, seeing the *Principles* and *Reasons* of it are *such*. And let it evidently appear in our Lives, that the esteem and love we have for Goodness and Virtue are not Passion but Reason; not Imagination, but Solid Judgment.

THE END.